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CISCO vs MICROSOFT

WHICH TEAM ARE YOU ON?

SMART
GUIDE

In partnership with



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CISCO vs MICROSOFT

Which team are you on?

A well-connected team is the lifeblood of any thriving business.

In today's ever-changing, agile environment, traditional solutions like email are no longer enough to facilitate fast and accurate communications.

As workers become increasingly mobile and diverse, companies need a strategy that ensures real, consistent results.

Team collaboration software is a market with a **growth rate of 9.0% CAGR** between 2018 and 2025. This technology has quickly emerged as the ultimate way to keep employees on the same page.

However, not just any team collaboration tool will do.



Companies need a system that supports the rise of **UC 3.0**.

INTRODUCING UC 3.0 - THE HOLY GRAIL OF COMMUNICATIONS

We've seen numerous changes in the unified communications market in recent years.

When Unified Communications first began, organisations were limited to complex, siloed technology. Communications strategies existed in islands across the company network.

Then UC 2.0 arrived, bringing with it concepts like convergence and omnichannel communications, where tools began to align.

UC 3.0 is where we're heading today. It's a global transformation of the unified communications market, where **companies of all sizes are adopting the cloud**, team collaboration apps, and even disruptive tech like AI.

Originally, it was only small and agile companies that could be flexible enough to take this new approach to communications. Enterprise businesses simply had too many existing tools and investments to replace.

Smaller, digitally-focused companies could jump into the cloud with little or no risk of wasting any existing legacy PBX systems in the process.

However, though the situation between smaller and larger organisations varied, both were facing a change in the communication marketplace.

Innovation became the name of the game as vendors joined forces to create unified stacks of tools more comprehensive than ever before. Companies put aside their differences and consolidated, pushed into action as "experience" became the only way to stand out in a crowded market.

Features and price points are no longer enough to capture and maintain the attention of an increasingly demanding audience. Businesses need the pillars of Unified Communications 3.0 to stand out among their peers.

UC 3.0: THE BASIS OF COMPARISON FOR TODAY'S INVESTMENTS

Over the last decade, we've seen a growing drive among all businesses, towards cloud-focused services.

An ongoing need for agility and flexibility made cloud the only real option for today's communication stack. First, we saw hosted voice - a way for brands to adapt their calling solutions according to their changing needs. Next, applications on a hosted platform entered the market.

Many exciting new vendors have entered the marketplace with a vision to create cloud services on microservices architecture. They've built their systems from the ground up to provide agility, scalability, and innovative solutions to customer problems.

The result?

We're seeing a convergence, unlike anything we've ever known before. Platforms are growing modular, and capabilities that once existed exclusively in their own islands are now appearing in the application stack as native services.

The new "as a service" framework is at the heart of UC 3.0.

It delivers a brand-new level of accessibility, mobility, and functionality, and transforms the way that we work with new productivity and efficiency solutions.

All the while, emerging technologies are also playing their part. Artificial Intelligence, the Internet of Things, and various other new ideas are also making their impact on our marketplace.



With so much change to account for, business communication decisions now come down to four essential pillars:



Customer experience: Customer experience is the number one differentiator in the modern world. According to Deloitte, **two-thirds of any company's competitive edge** is based on the experience they can give their clients. Today's consumers demand omni-channel discussions, hosted on the platforms they prefer, and delivered at a speed that they appreciate.



User Experience: In a fast-paced world, employees need as much empowerment as possible to thrive. This means that companies need to create a single-pane-of-glass approach with minimal distractions and the best possible context in every conversation. "User experience **focuses on maximizing the user's pleasure**, satisfaction, motivation, efficiency, and productivity when using a product or service."



Team Experience: Unfortunately, only around 33% of today's workforce are actively engaged at work. This means that most of the time, you're not getting the best work out of your team. The easiest way to get your people to engage is to **improve their teamwork situation**. Invest in camaraderie and project ownership, and your results will transform. Aragon Research predicts that by 2025, team collaboration will be the primary way that people collaborate and communicate.



Business experience: Finally, a business also needs every aspect of its organisation to be aligned in the context of experience. That means that it needs to be easy for IT teams and leaders to manage systems, maintain platform reliability and enhance security. Innovators should be able to innovate with API's easily, connect machines and people, and transform strategies in an agile manner. The only way that organisations can deliver positive experiences to customers is to make sure they're set up for success. After all, **67% of consumers** state bad experiences as a reason for churn. Make sure your company processes flow seamlessly, and good customer experience will be a natural by-product.

HOW UC 3.0 APPLIES TO THE CHOICE BETWEEN CISCO AND MICROSOFT

So, how does this concept of UC 3.0 affect the choice you make for your collaboration tools?

Simple.

It's all about breaking down your new tech investments to match your business objectives with the solutions that can provide the right outcomes.

For instance, if your goal with implementing collaboration tool is to improve team experience, then you'll need to make sure that your chosen software is created with your workstream in mind.

Does it offer:



Team collaboration: A scalable and searchable digital workspace with voice, and video calling, web conferencing, instant chat, file sharing, bots, and notifications?



Video conferencing: A strategy to keep your teams engaged in face-to-face conversations through virtual meeting rooms on the cloud, meeting assistants, room kits for huddle spaces, telepresence solutions, video conferencing equipment, and effective endpoints?



Supplemental tools: Can you take file and screen-sharing to the next level with interactive whiteboards, enhanced Artificial Intelligence assistances, screen capture, and recording and more?

Every collaboration system offers its own range of benefits. The only way to ensure the right results is to start from your personal company problems and work backward.

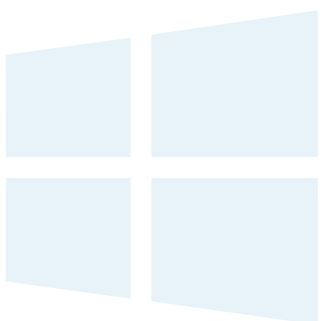
GETTING TO KNOW MICROSOFT UC & COLLABORATION IN 2019

With the concept of UC 3.0 in mind, let's begin our comparison with one of the best-known players in the communication industry: Microsoft.

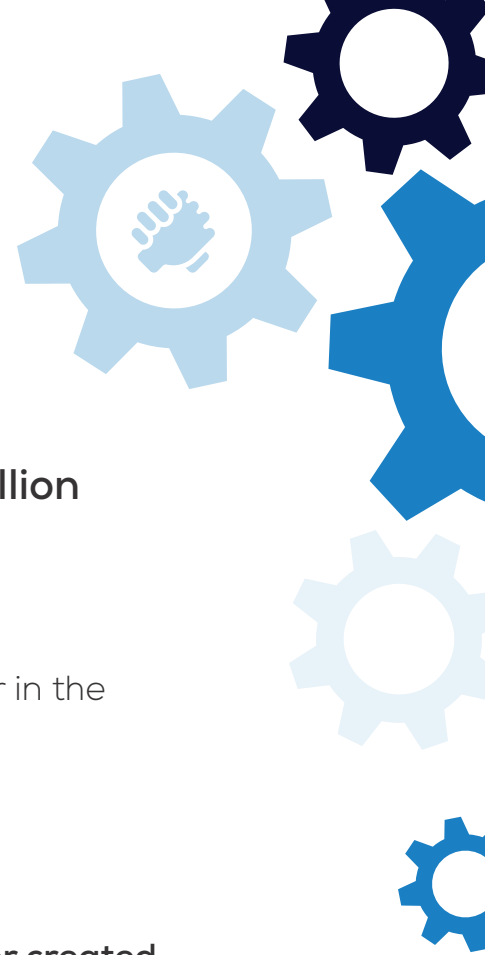
For meetings, collaboration and productivity, Microsoft has been a strong enterprise player for a number of years. Microsoft started in the meeting space with Lync, which eventually became "Skype for Business." Although Skype for Business is being phased out and replaced with Microsoft Teams, there are still around countless companies using the tool today.

The creation of Microsoft Teams helps Microsoft to enter the world of Unified Communications 3.0, by combining user experience with customer experience solutions (contact centre), business experience (management and administration), and team experience (collaboration).

It's not just an audio conferencing and instant messaging tool. Microsoft Teams is a fully immersive component of the Microsoft Office ecosystem - the productivity suite that has made Microsoft so popular throughout the years.



There are approximately **1.2 billion users** around the world using some manner of Office product.



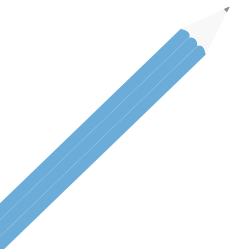
Office 365 now has 155 million monthly active users (MAU) and is gaining new users at over 3 million seats per month according to [this source](#).

Microsoft Teams brings company tools for collaboration, communication, customer service, and administration together in the same single-pane-of-glass environment.

It's no wonder that:

- ⚙️ Microsoft Teams is the fastest growing Microsoft app ever created.
- ⚙️ The tool spans across 41 languages and 181 markets.
- ⚙️ Office 365 saw a 35% growth in constant currency over the last year.

Most importantly, Microsoft Teams is becoming consistently more impressive.



Over the last 6 months, 100 new features were added to the environment, including blurred backgrounds on video calls, frontline worker services and more.

COLLABORATION AND PRODUCTIVITY: CONNECTED

Microsoft has emerged as a leader in the team collaboration environment specifically because of its acceptance of UC 3.0.

Simply put, Microsoft doesn't just offer collaboration as an add-on to your existing environment. Instead, Teams is a natural component of your existing Microsoft ecosystem.

Microsoft Teams allows companies to hold scheduled and impromptu meetings, video conferences and calls, while they have access to the tools and services they rely on each day. They can start a conversation from a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, or bring PowerPoint presentations into their meetings. There's even the option to connect with Outlook calendar to ensure that everyone is available for a conversation.

Of course, it's not just the connection between Microsoft Office 365 and Teams that makes the Microsoft offering so special. Microsoft also has a strong approach to the communication and business management worlds. Company leaders can organise their teams into different groups, track actions through Activity tabs, and customise their environment to suit their needs.

The Microsoft Teams adoption rate has been astronomical. Teams entered the industry in preview format by the end of 2016 and launched fully in early 2017. Although initially, companies were concerned about the idea of a replacement for Skype for Business (particularly in the Enterprise), many of those worried have quickly evaporated.

After all, Teams today doesn't just have feature parity with Skype for Business (Online edition only as I write this); it can do so much more. Some Enterprises however are resisting the move to Teams due to recent investments in perpetual licences and not wanting to move to a pay monthly model.



Increasingly, companies are beginning to see Microsoft Teams not just as a replacement for Skype for Business, but as a crucial component of their complete UC ecosystem.

As of March 2019, Microsoft Teams has more than **500,000 organisations** reliant on the platform - compared to Cisco's collaboration portfolio, which serves **around 300 million people** around the world.

It's tricky to compare numbers like for like on this basis, however based on some simple math, I'd estimate that there are already more than 50 million Teams users out there.

If Cisco convert a good portion convert their 130 million Webex users to Webex Teams, then we're going to see an exciting battle for top spot over the next few years.

As I said, it's difficult to get a like-for-like comparison, since Microsoft never shares the number of individual users using Microsoft Teams. However, it's fair to say that Microsoft Teams is bigger than the alternative offerings from Facebook and Google (Workplace and Hangouts). It's also gaining on other productivity solutions like Slack too.

For many people, Microsoft Teams represents the more enterprise-focused approach to collaboration that Slack simply can't provide.

It delivers the security, administration and productivity tools that Slack lags behind on.

Most importantly, Microsoft also has the benefit of being an existing part of many current communication and productivity networks already. It's hard to find a business that hasn't at least considered using Microsoft Office in their stack.

GETTING TO KNOW CISCO UC & COLLABORATION IN 2019

Microsoft certainly has heritage in the collaboration and enterprise communication environment.

However, Cisco isn't a new player either. Cisco has been the heart and soul of communication for many businesses for years. The company has been **delivering communications since 1984**.

It was **back in 2007** when Cisco decided that they would begin making their way into collaboration systems - long before Microsoft Teams was a blip on the competing company's radar. The acquisition of WebEx for \$3.2 billion set Cisco up with the tools they needed to provide consistent meeting solutions to their businesses.

In 2009, Cisco took its strategy a step further, by **purchasing Tandberg** - the video conferencing company. Acquiring a global leader in video conferencing put Cisco on the cutting edge of the collaboration marketplace at the time. The video conferencing solutions that Cisco offers today have come a long way from the bulky meeting rooms that existed back in 2009. However, Cisco seems to have been ahead of the game in terms of endpoints and innovative solutions for a number of years.

More recently, Cisco took its unified communications strategy to the next level with its purchase of the market leading UCaaS platform vendor, BroadSoft. This acquisition gave Cisco a truly unique way to stand out in the cloud communications space.

Unlike other team collaboration tools that offer voice calls through work-around routing components and add-ons, Cisco can build native cloud calling directly into their service portfolio which enables Cisco Webex Teams users to make and receive external calls on global dial-in numbers.

END-TO-END COLLABORATION FROM CISCO

Cisco is a true innovator in the world of Unified Communications 3.0.

Currently, around 130 million users are on Webex each month. That's a huge number of people relying on Cisco's collaboration tools to keep their enterprise projects in check. Bearing in mind I'm not sure whether the users quoted are paying subscribers or free guests in Webex meetings..

When Cisco Webex Teams launched, it was initially called "Cisco Spark." Cisco introduced the tool as part of their Project Squared solution, an initiative that intended to create the ultimate workstream collaboration tool.

In 2018, Cisco revealed that **their "Spark" tool** would become a component of the Webex ecosystem, as Cisco Webex Teams. Cisco announced that all of the collaboration features present in Spark would be offered alongside the features in the Webex conferencing platform, such as guest access, content sharing, whiteboarding and more.

The idea was to create a more consistent collaboration environment which aligned with the concept of UC 3.0.

Although Cisco Spark had its own type of meeting strategy before, Webex also had a meeting environment too. It made sense to converge the solutions together, complete with a video-first approach that took advantage of Cisco's prior acquisitions.



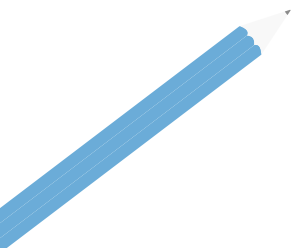
Today, Cisco owns more than **50%** of the UC and Meetings market.



What's more, their collaboration strategy earns approximately 5 billion dollars - highlighting the sheer importance of their team strategy.

When Webex Teams launched, part of the Webex calling, meetings and Teams portfolio, the leaders in Cisco prioritized the visual aspects of collaboration.

They wanted people to do more than just message each other online.



Cisco wanted an environment where companies could bring people together through video, screen sharing, file sharing, and even presentations launched over digital whiteboards.



MORE THAN JUST A MEETING ROOM

One compelling thing about Cisco as a collaboration tool provider is that the company has always done meetings well.

Cisco Webex Teams users can organise their teams by individual departments and groups. The integration of BroadSoft in 2018 means that the company can appeal to a wider range of marketplaces too.

On top of that, Cisco recently brought a new leadership team and partner ecosystem into the mix, which has completely transformed the vibe of their portfolio. The Cisco partner ecosystem means that companies aren't just tapping into Cisco's heritage and marketplace knowledge, they're also engaging with developers, value added distributors, resellers and system integrators that can improve their full end-to-end experience.

For instance, Cisco's extensive range of partnerships has helped them to create a team collaboration environment unlike any other, with a focus on hardware, as well as software. Yes, you can launch calls over the internet and send real-time messages to customers. However, businesses can also take their collaboration to the next level with a range of applications and endpoints.

The Webex boards coincides with the digital whiteboard inside of Webex to give users a fully hands-on experience. AI solutions like the Webex assistant (created from Cisco's acquisition of MindMeld) extends functionality and availability to more devices. Cisco even creates full room series so that companies can create customisable huddle rooms for agile employees.

Speaking of flexibility, Cisco also launched tools like Webex Share - a hardware adapter that can transform any TV into a meeting screen. There's even the Collaboration Flex pricing plan that changes subscription elements according to the needs of each active user.

Like Microsoft Teams, Cisco Webex Teams stands out because it's more than just enterprise messaging or video chat. It's a complete solution for business, team, employee and customer experience.

CISCO WEBEX CALLING VS MICROSOFT TEAMS CALLING

When collaboration tools like Slack first emerged in the marketplace, they focused mainly on instant messaging and file sharing.

People saw these applications as an addition to their PBX and calling environments. However, as UC 3.0 continues to develop, and businesses demand a more consistent, single-pane-of-glass experience, companies are searching for solutions that can combine calling and messaging.

Cloud calling environments within the UC and collaboration stack improve user experience in a multitude of different ways. They reduce the need to switch between various applications to accelerate conversations and provide better productivity in the workplace. For calling solutions to thrive in a UX-focused collaboration tool, they need:

Intelligent Call Routing

Calling plans and SIP trunking, dial-in numbers, auto attendants, voice mail, IVR, peer-to-peer dialing, call-forwarding and so much more. The more intelligently calls are routed, the more time users can save.

Interoperability

Otherwise known as federation in communication platforms, interoperability is crucial for an advanced UC&C environment. If businesses have multiple offices in different locations, and separate vendor platforms to consider, then interoperability is essential. When sites are disconnected, CX suffers because calls cannot be transferred seamlessly.

User Applications and Devices

As workforces become increasingly dispersed and mobile, UC apps need to be available on a host of devices, including smartphones and tablets. What's more, it's essential for employees to have access to the right tools, including IP phones, personal speakerphones, headsets, video endpoints and more.

CISCO WEBEX TEAMS CALLING PLANS

Cisco **delivers calling solutions** through Webex Teams that build on its acquisition of the BroadSoft economy.

Large enterprise customers with Cisco Unified Communications Manager (CUCM) or Cisco Hosted Collaboration Solution (HCS) in their existing environment can use a hybrid connection to Webex Teams for PSTN calling capabilities.

Smaller companies interested in the Cisco Webex Teams experience can unlock calling solutions through partners like Optus and Century Link. These third-party strategies give smaller organisations access to Webex Calling with Webex Teams as the primary User Interface. The strategy can offer a basic range of calling features, hosted by Cisco, or a Cisco Webex Calling approved partner. Unfortunately, BroadCloud Calling is mainly intended for companies that don't need advanced routing features, like those available through CUCM.

Webex Calling (formerly BroadCloud), is now available on the Cisco Collaboration Flex plan. This strategy gives companies with more than 100 employees a practical and immersive approach for taking their business into the cloud at their own pace.

It's still built on the world-renowned BroadSoft BroadWorks UCaaS environment.

What's more, it takes advantage of Cisco's strong partner ecosystem to deliver more customisable solutions for users. As I write this document however, Webex Calling is only available in a limited number of countries. I suspect by 2020 Cisco will have a many more countries available.




There's even a **Bring-your-own carrier SIP trunking solution** available through the **Cisco ecosystem**, so businesses have complete control over their unified communication strategy and makes migration much less of a **big bang approach**.

Cisco Webex Calling brings all the features of your traditional Cisco UC platform to you through the cloud, via a monthly subscription service that suits your need. The calling solution already has a strong presence in the enterprise environment, and it's beginning to make it's way into smaller environments too (mid-market), thanks to the versatility of the Flex plan.

However, it's worth noting that you cannot simply to go [Webex.com](https://www.webex.com) and subscribe to a calling plan. To activate Webex Calling you'll need to reach out to an approved Cisco partner and from what I understand Cisco do not have plans to sell directly in the same way Microsoft does.

The Cisco Flex calling plans offer:

-  Access to full-stack, enterprise-grade cloud collaboration with cloud calling, teams, meetings, customer care, and integrated devices.
-  Secure and reliable cloud service solutions and implementations (supported by certified channel partners).
-  The flexibility to add a range of on-premise and cloud system deployments into your Cisco environment.
-  Support for global and multi-site networking requirements.
-  Intelligent user experiences that integrates devices and customer collaboration applications for an intuitive workflow.

MICROSOFT TEAMS CALLING PLANS

Microsoft's approach to cloud calling is simpler to understand than Cisco's.

From day one, Microsoft has made it clear that Teams is the heart of their unified communication portfolio and a replacement for Skype for Business. To deliver true unified communication, they know that they need more than just instant messaging and VoIP calls.

That's why Microsoft delivered **feature parity between Skype for Business and Teams** and continues to develop new features to empower the users on Teams.

To access calling **through Microsoft Teams**, you'll need an Office 365 license, and a public switched telephone network calling strategy, either through the Microsoft calling plans, or direct routing services with a SIP trunking provider.

Similarly to Cisco, Microsoft offers a bring-your-own carrier SIP trunking option and global dial-in numbers that span across 196 countries and regions at the time of writing.

Importantly, if you purchase a domestic and international calling plan, your country or region will be based on your user license, and not the billing address that you enter to pay for your calling environment.



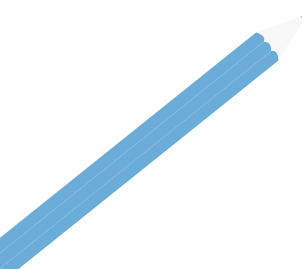
Today, Microsoft Teams users can expect a calling experience with Teams that's on par with, if not better than the Microsoft Skype for Business online solution.

There are calling plans available through Microsoft for small businesses, all the way through to large enterprises. What's more, if you decide to go through the partner route with a SIP trunking solution, then you can rely on a strong ecosystem of Microsoft partners.

One particularly important component of Microsoft's calling plan strategy is that they offer a logical migration path to take users from Skype for Business into Microsoft Teams. That means that if you're already set up with Skype for Business, switching to Teams will be as seamless and natural as possible.

Remember, calls between Skype for Business and Teams users are already free. However, you do need the calling plan to ensure that you can connect with landline telephones.

With a range of calling solutions available for any size of company through both Cisco and Microsoft Teams, the choice for most companies will come down to where you are today.



Customers will transition eventually to Microsoft Teams and Cisco Webex Teams, however large enterprises with significant investments and complexity may prefer to take smaller steps to get to a full cloud solution.



CISCO WEBEX MEETINGS VS MICROSOFT TEAMS MEETINGS

What separates Unified Communication 3.0 solutions from basic collaboration tools?

Slack has always been a major competitor in the collaborative space. It was one of the first applications to introduce the world to team collaboration tools.

However, while Slack integrations and features continue to grow, it's rarely enough to suit the complete needs of a considerable enterprise organisation.

When **collaboration** and **communication** is a crucial feature of a growing businesses, you **can't afford to compromise** on any part of the UC 3.0 stack.

Slack excels in team experiences, but there's nothing there for enhanced user experience, customer experience, or business experience.

When we look at the enterprise-focused tools like Cisco Webex Teams and Microsoft Teams, we discover solutions that can take meetings and productivity to the next level.



For Team collaboration meeting support, Cisco and Microsoft both offer:

-  Consistent one-on-one team chats with unique channels and groups for each department in your organisation.
-  Visual collaboration with real-time file sharing and editing opportunities, along with digital whiteboarding.
-  File sharing via integrated storage options, like Microsoft OneDrive and Sharepoint.
-  Bots for meeting assistance, collaboration planning, and even meeting recording or transcription.
-  VoIP calling through Webex Calling and Microsoft Teams Calling.
-  Video conversations available at the click of a button without the need for extra apps and access codes.
-  Meeting scheduling and organisation without having to flip between calendars.
-  A wide range of integrated video endpoints, room kits and interactive whiteboards.

So, what can each provider specifically offer when it comes to Meetings in UC 3.0?

CISCO WEBEX TEAMS MEETINGS

Cisco Webex Meetings and Events are at the heart of Cisco's Meeting strategy.

These proven tools offer an integrated conferencing experience. Whether you're joining Webex standard meetings, meetings from the Teams app, or personal room meetings, you'll be able to enjoy a range of incredible features.

For instance:

- Personal room meetings to keep conversations private
- Cisco Meet now for instant communication.
- Built-in Webex assistant - a voice assistant that can record conversations, transcribe discussions and set up future meetings on your behalf
- People Insights so that you can gather context about who you're speaking to before the session begins.
- Facial recognition in meeting rooms to track usage of collaboration tools.

Crucially, **anyone with a Webex Teams account** can start a meeting easily with just one button. There's no need to wait around for IT teams to come and set your solution up for you. Users can join from anywhere, switch devices with ease, and more.



When someone with a Webex Meetings account designs a space for a meeting, they'll also have access to all of the Webex meetings capabilities they need, including phone audio options, recording, guest meeting access and more.

Anyone in the space can be given the right to record the meeting, mute and unmute people, or add people to the conversation, without relying on a singular host.

Webex Meetings supports up to 200 participants at once, and there are meeting controls that allow you to switch between speaker view, shared content, people lists, and so much more. There's complete end-to-end control over all the information you could need to enhance your conferencing sessions.

Combine your meeting solutions with added Webex features like digital whiteboards and smart assistants, and you can make your daily conferences as intelligent as you like.

The Cisco Webex Assistant can even help with screen sharing, conference room availability management and booking, device control, starting and recording meetings and so much more.

Cisco's addition of **artificial intelligence into the meeting room environment** helps to add both simplicity and intuition to the collaboration space.



MICROSOFT TEAMS MEETINGS

Meetings in Microsoft Teams combine video, audio, and file sharing into a single cloud environment.

Whenever you need to connect with your team, you can simply set up your conference according to your individual needs. You don't even need to be a member of an organisation or have a paid Teams account to take part in a Teams meeting.

Microsoft focuses on making their meeting experiences as simple as possible. They're completely native to the Teams environment.

You can even add your Meetings add on into Outlook so that you can schedule your meetings and launch them directly **from your email client**.

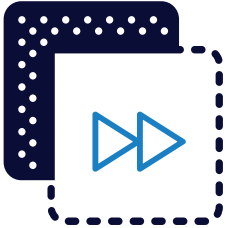
Users can join a meeting or initiate a call with their colleagues without downloading plugins thanks to the availability of WebRTC solutions. You can just visit [Teams.microsoft.com](https://teams.microsoft.com) from Chrome or Edge to join a Teams Meeting or connect in a 1:1 Call.



One of the things that makes **Microsoft Teams** Meetings so compelling is the fact that the company is **constantly creating new features** to make your conversations more **incredible**.



For instance:



Adapt your background in video calls.

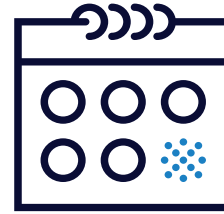
Make sure that your coworkers aren't distracted by what's going on behind you with background blur and customisable background options for any meeting.

This AI-enhanced tool means no-one has to see your messy office again.



Support for up to 250 people.

You can host meetings across multiple organisations, create a meetings lobby to dial in qualified callers, and provide fallback support. This means that people can join meetings even when Network issues are present.



Calendar application.

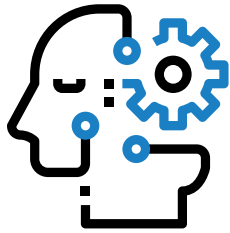
To keep your groups and meetings on schedule, Microsoft is rolling out a new calendar app this year (2019).



Accessible to all users.

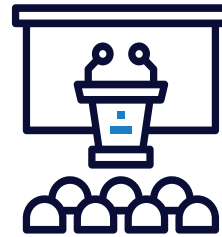
For those who need more help understanding what's going on in a meeting, live captions and subtitles are now available in your meeting environment.

What's more, there's inline message translation too, so that you can still enjoy conversations with your colleagues, regardless of which language you speak.



AI support during video calls.

Artificial intelligence tools provide access to session recording and transcription features for compliance and data storage purposes.



Build upon the experience.

Third-party room kits with Microsoft expert partners ensure that you can build impressive huddle and conference rooms with state-of-the-art hardware to enhance your conversations.



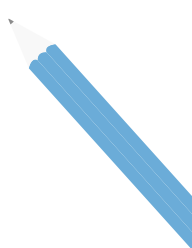
Microsoft Teams Meetings support dual screen rooms, offer companion experiences with mobile devices, and will soon provide “proximity detection” too.

This means that you’ll be able to add nearby Microsoft Teams rooms to any meeting.

What’s more, Meetings through Microsoft Teams are exceptionally easy to schedule and manage. You can start a meeting instantly with one touch, and even set up **proximity-based meeting joining** if you prefer. There’s also the option for users to share single applications rather than a full screen when they’re trying to give context to a meeting. What’s more, if anything goes wrong, interactive troubleshooting will get your conversations back up and running in no time.

Meetings in Microsoft Teams are already some of the most immersive and intuitive on the market for any business. The company isn’t stopping its innovation track any time soon either.

Microsoft is constantly rolling out new and improved tools and services to make their meeting experience the best around for UC 3.0.



CISCO WEBEX TEAMS VS MICROSOFT TEAMS

Team collaboration tools have become some of the most valuable applications in the workplace.

86% of employees believe that **lack of collaboration** kills a company. Unfortunately, while dispersed and remote teams can do a great deal for cost savings and productivity, they also make it harder for groups to collaborate as they would in an office environment.

Collaborative tools for file sharing, screen sharing, and synchronised working via the cloud have emerged to override these problems. In the age of UC 3.0, collaborative solutions are crucial to team experience.

They drive results through:

Vital cloud workspaces



Team collaboration tools create persistent and searchable digital workspaces, in which groups can mimic the office environment. By 2021, Gartner predicts that collaboration tools will be worth \$4.9 billion.

When we reach 2022, **70% of teams** will rely upon file sharing, persistent chat, notification, bots, and other features to get work done each day.



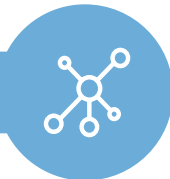
Face-to-face communications



In a remote and mobile working environment, it's difficult for teams to bond without the nuances of face-to-face conversation. Many collaborative tools, including those from Microsoft and Cisco, solve this issue with Video conferencing as a service (VCaaS).

Through video, teams can access the facial expressions and body language of their co-workers. Many advanced solutions also come with access to room kits for huddle spaces, telepresence services, and even artificial intelligence assistants.

Valuable endpoints



Hardware also has a vital part to play in the success of collaborative strategies. Interactive whiteboards with embedded operating systems deliver an easy way for people to work together on projects. Effective teamwork tools also link these services to features like file sharing, screen sharing, video conferencing, and even meeting assistants powered by AI.

Artificial Intelligence bots drive better meeting room productivity with features like device control, meeting recording and capture, and even room bookings and management.

So, does Microsoft Teams or Cisco Webex Teams deliver better collaborative results for UC 3.0?

At first glance, both tools have a great deal in common.

Cisco even changed the name of their **collaborative service to “Teams,”** as part of a comprehensive platform convergence strategy. Like many of the competing collaboration tools in the market today, Microsoft and Cisco both offer their users access to crucial integrations like calendaring and file sharing services.

They also both come with options for persistent messaging, integrated voice and video, and even connections to critical whiteboards and other endpoints.

Together, both Microsoft and Cisco also sell their Teams solutions as part of a comprehensive UC experience. You’re not just buying team tools from either company.

With Microsoft, Teams is available as part of a complete subscription to the Office 365 productivity plan. Through Cisco, Teams comes alongside the Webex calling and meeting services, with a connection to the Flex bundles for customisable subscriptions.

In simple terms, this means that Cisco and Webex both take a more “complete” view of collaboration as part of the collaboration stack compared to competitors like Slack and Workplace by Facebook. While the approach that Cisco and Microsoft takes is similar, there are some major differences between their offerings.

CISCO WEBEX TEAMS

Cisco's Webex Teams collaboration app is designed to bring people together and make work happen wherever your groups might be.

Through immersive applications, a comprehensive user interface, and a range of screen and file sharing tools, [Cisco Webex Teams](#) solves company challenges and builds better relationships.

Cisco keeps your employees on the same page through group conversations called "Spaces." In these Spaces, individuals can access persistent chat, meetings via voice and video, schedule management, whiteboarding, and file-sharing. You can even deliver your files to others through popular tools like OneDrive and SharePoint.

Speaking of using your favourite tools, Cisco's advanced collaboration solution comes with access to the Cisco Webex App Hub, which allows users to browse through dozens of integrations designed by Cisco partners. You can find intelligent bots, survey tools, and even opportunities to integrate with CRM like Salesforce and ServiceNow. Whilst you may not find a ready-to-go application for every popular SaaS application in the [Cisco Webex App Hub](#), that doesn't mean you can't integrate with your critical business apps. Cisco offers [Webex for Developers](#) which allows partners and developers to create what they need.

One particularly impressive feature in Cisco Webex Teams comes from its ability to support collaboration from outside of your enterprise. Whether you're interacting with contractors, shareholders, or anyone else, you can access both free and paid accounts for guests. Cisco's single-instance model for guest access ensures that any user can be added into a conversation with as little stress and confusion as possible. The result is fewer issues to deal with when you need to extend your conversation outside of your workplace.

Because Cisco is dedicated to delivering excellent security, even when you invite Guests into the mix, their access is restricted by IT. However, your people still get to bypass awkward set-up processes and start collaborating as quickly as possible.



MICROSOFT TEAMS COLLABORATION

Microsoft Teams now has more than 500,000 customers around the world – so it must have something extra special to offer the collaborative environment.

Not so long ago, Microsoft showed that it could deliver opportunities for even the smallest companies, by introducing **a free version of their Teams** app. The solution doesn't have features that are quite as extensive as those in the Premium version, but the amount of services you get is still very generous.

In Microsoft Teams, your people collaborate through Channels, where they can access similar features to those on Cisco Teams. For instance, persistent chat is available, as well as video and audio conferencing and file sharing. One particularly compelling feature that doesn't appear in Cisco's app is the option to create threaded conversations.

Threaded discussions give users the option to branch replies off specific messages, without making the entire collaborative space more complex. Threaded conversations can deliver a smoother experience in a complex team channel, particularly if you have multiple people that you need to connect with at once.

Another impressive feature in Microsoft's messaging department is the ability to integrate AI with native translations. This means that teams from around the world can continue to communicate regardless of their preferred language. File Sharing is supported both direct from Office 365, and through integrations with OneDrive and SharePoint. What's more, similar to Cisco, Microsoft Teams offers a bots and apps store, where you can find inclusions with things like Trello, Asana, Zendesk, and Salesforce.

For developers with an eye for creation, Microsoft also offers a far more complete developer platform than Cisco. The App Studio available through Microsoft Teams allows for individuals to create their own custom apps from scratch. The hub is clean, simple, and much easier to use for many than Cisco's App Hub.

CISCO CONTACT CENTRE VS MICROSOFT TEAMS

So far, we've discussed how both Microsoft Teams and Cisco Webex Teams can deliver team and user experience solutions for UC 3.0.

Now, it's time to look beyond the workforce, into towards the needs of your customers.

Remember, **67% of customers** reference bad experiences as their primary reason for churn. If you want to hold onto your community in today's competitive environment, you need to provide an exceptional experience.

Because collaborative tools like Cisco Webex Teams and Microsoft Teams keep the back-end of your company connected, they also deliver upgraded opportunities for stronger customer experience. If your people can communicate freely and work together on customer problems, then they can provide results much faster.

However, companies like Microsoft and Cisco are also developing new ways to connect the collaborative and contact centre experiences, to ensure a more complete UC environment.

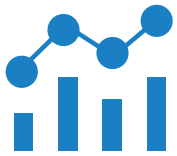
In the world of UC 3.0, **front-end and back-end communications** are more connected than ever.



Today's competing companies need to search for a solution that provides:



Contact centre: Omni-channel communication is a must-have in today's CX-focused world. The best unified communication solutions come with access to contact centre as a service systems. These hosted cloud environments provide real-time monitoring of customer interactions via dashboards and wallboards. They also support stronger results via skills-based, prescriptive and predictive routing. Some come with Workforce Management and Workforce Optimisation tools built-in.



Analytics: It's not enough to just communicate with your customers anymore. UC 3.0 demands that you're continually gathering and analysing data to improve your results. The right solutions will come with access to call reporting, call recording, and call evaluation tools. Some of the best services also offer speech-to-text, which makes searching through content easier, as well as real-time transcription and translation. Microsoft provides a host of speech technologies powered by AI to measure intent, context, and sentiment.



Chatbots: Human beings aren't handling customer service alone anymore. We're living in an age where it's possible to get support from digital co-workers too. AI-powered interfaces, bots, digital assistants and augmented agent technology all lead to a more consistent and contextual experience for customers and agents.

CISCO CONTACT CENTRE

When it comes to contact centre solutions, Cisco offers something to suit almost every business.

Their Customer Journey Platform is available on a CCaaS basis to those with their eye on the cloud. On the other hand, there's also a range of on-prem customer journey services, such as packaged contact centre enterprise, unified contact centre express, and unified contact centre enterprise.

As companies continue to demand more than just a "one-size-fits-all" contact centre to suit their customers, Cisco has plenty of heritage and expertise to help.

Cisco allows companies to combine all of their software with any other applications, for a completely unified and easy-to-manage system. When everything is connected, it's easier to deliver context to crucial business conversations.

Cisco's "Custom Application Development and Integration" (CADI) services also ensure that individuals can customise their Cisco experience according to their needs, with integrations to third-party apps and tools.

Cisco also takes CX as part of the UC experience to the next level with access to a range of AI solutions.

For instance, you can build AI-empowered self-service solutions to give customers the answers they're looking for with agent support. Intelligent routing makes sure that clients always reach the best agents and the right times, through valuable and proven routing algorithms.



There's also real-time support available for contact centre agent.

Cisco's "Answers for Agents" service ensures that your employees can deliver the seamless and customised experiences that your customers need to remember your brand.

For the most part, Cisco's contact centre strategy still seems to focus on larger enterprise companies, with limited options for fewer than 100 agents.

However, there are still plenty of opportunities for companies to expand their customer experience strategy through everything from virtual assistants, to intelligent routing.

Whilst Cisco are putting a lot of energy into their CCaaS front-runner, the Customer Journey Platform, Cisco are also building bridges from their legacy platforms into the cloud, so rest assured there's a solution in the Cisco portfolio for every deployment model possible whether you desire a private, hybrid or fully public cloud delivered contact centre solution.



MICROSOFT CONTACT CENTRE

For now, implementing your contact centre as a connected solution with your Microsoft Teams and other UC services is still a complicated process.

Companies can only integrate contact centres through third-party solutions. What's more, the options are somewhat limited. You can find a range of applications intended to expand features like contact centre, attendant console, and call recording into your Microsoft experience in the [App Catalogue](#).

However, for now, these solutions are only available for Skype for Business, and not Teams.

Some of the significant partners working with Microsoft on the CX component of their UC 3.0 strategy include Enghouse Interactive, Landis Technologies and Genesys. Unfortunately, accessing even basic call analytics is still a challenging and expensive process, with all innovation coming from outside of Microsoft Teams.

At the time of writing this document the developer community are waiting for Microsoft to open up the cloud calling API so that they can connect their contact centre applications natively to Microsoft Teams.

Once Microsoft allow API connections into a Microsoft Teams tenant, I expect to see lots more 'Teams first' CX solutions to enter the market. For now, if you require a Microsoft Teams contact centre based solution it will inevitably involve some kind of hybrid connection to your Skype for Business Server and users, or it will need to outside your Teams platform in its own silo.

As companies continue to see the value in combining their collaborative and contact centre solutions, Microsoft is still a little behind the curve. If they want to ensure the [continued adoption of Microsoft Teams](#), they'll need to invest more deeply into this concept going forward.

CISCO ENDPOINTS VS MICROSOFT TEAMS ENDPOINTS

Cloud-based solutions for communication and collaboration have increased the global focus on “software” strategies for overcoming common problems.

However, there’s still a crucial part for endpoints to play in the communication environment today.

Today’s teams still need noise-cancelling headsets to ensure that they can focus on the conversations they’re having with co-workers and clients.

Video conferencing wouldn’t be much good without camera systems that can capture high-quality images and stream them at speed to corresponding users.

Both Microsoft and Cisco are also have whiteboarding services and entire room kits that help to turn any space into a team-ready environment, designed to support remote workers and in-office employees alike.

CISCO COLLABORATION ENDPOINTS

Cisco offers a range of endpoints designed to take your Webex Meetings and Teams experience to the next level.

For instance, the Cisco Webex Board is an all-in-one whiteboard that offers video conferencing, wireless presentation and screen sharing for smarter collaboration. Cisco also provides a host of native Cisco IP phones, conferencing devices and other tools to transform your meeting room environments.

Cisco's Webex devices work naturally with Webex Teams and Meetings to ensure that you're getting the most comprehensive collaboration environments available. Everything works seamlessly together. There's even a softphone client available through Cisco Jabber.

For those who need an entire room in a single package, there's a range of Room kits to explore. Some are designed for larger conference spaces, while smaller solutions are specifically intended for the rising trend of huddle rooms. Cisco Webex Room Kit Mini is an AI-powered environment designed to bring people together in quick and agile conferences, regardless of where they decide to setup their discussions.

When it comes to desktop devices, Cisco also has you covered with a DX series of video conferencing solutions ideally suited to deliver high-definition video combined with crystal clear audio. There's even access to facial recognition so that you know exactly who is in the room. Speaking of intelligence, Cisco conference devices like the Webex board is powered with machine learning. Your video systems can ask you whether you want to enable proximity pairing or join a meeting as soon as you enter a conference room.

From Cisco Headsets, like the 500 series with active noise-cancelling built in, to Telepresence solutions, there's something to suit every endpoint need in the Cisco portfolio. The company's long-standing heritage in the device development market makes it easy to transform any meeting room with the latest technology.



MICROSOFT TEAMS ENDPOINTS

While Cisco's devices are all native components in the Cisco offering, Microsoft relies on its partnerships with third-party vendors to deliver many solutions.

On the one hand, this means that you need to connect with a broader range of vendors to complete your UC 3.0 experience. On the other hand, it also means that you can enjoy a more a la carte approach to collaboration and conferencing, using all of your favorite tools.

Microsoft delivers a host of SIP devices and tools through third-party vendors including Yealink, Poly, and AudioCodes. For noise-cancelling and concentration-boosting headsets, you can enjoy support from Poly, Sennheiser and Jabra.

For a comprehensive meeting room complete with HD video conferencing, you can explore solutions from HP, Lenovo, Logitech, Crestron, Yealink, and Poly.

You can enjoy a native Microsoft Teams experience on a lot of approved devices, which allows for a more comprehensive end-to-end experience. Although, currently, the only endpoints that Microsoft offers in-house include things like the Microsoft Surface Hub - the interactive whiteboard you can use to upgrade your meetings.

Instead of focusing on both a wide range of hardware and software at the same time, Microsoft has chosen to concentrate on relationships with some of the leading endpoint providers in the world instead. This means that the company can focus on what it does best, without preventing its customers from accessing the latest tools.

CISCO WEBEX TEAMS VS MICROSOFT TEAMS ADMINISTRATION

Finally, you know how Microsoft and Cisco Webex Teams can support your team experience, user experience, and customer experience strategies.

There's only one question remaining - which of these tools will give you the UC 3.0 solution you need to boost your business experience too?

Business experience is all about making sure that you have the right level of control over the tools that your teams use. After all, all, for a new application or service to be successful, it needs to be secure, compliant, accessible, and even affordable. On top of that, it's essential to make sure that you can convince your teams that they should be adopting new tools at a time when they're already rushing through each day.

The Teams tool that you choose should always feature the following things:



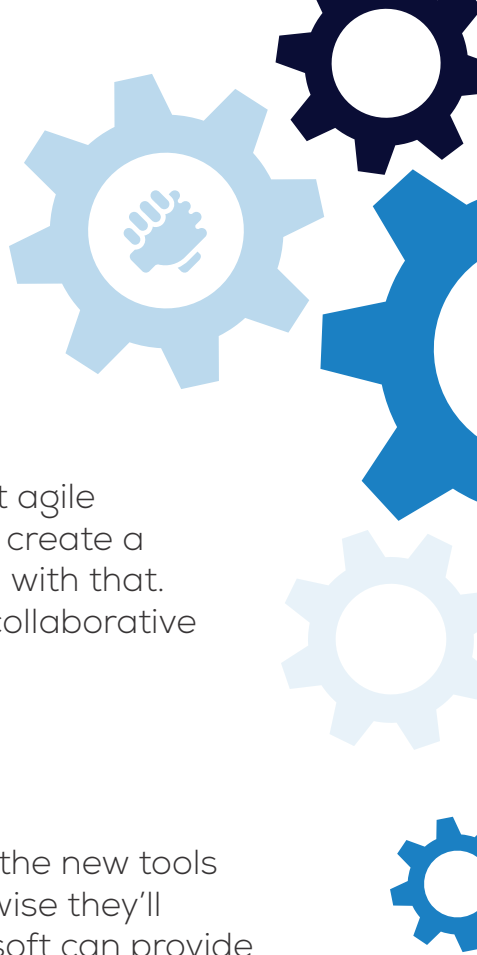
Administration Support

Make sure that you have absolute control over your system with access to diagnostics tools, configuration and system programming services, and more.



Integrations

The best workplace collaboration solutions are always ready to plug into your existing applications and business processes. SaaS and server-based software applications like Microsoft Office, CRM tools, Helpdesk, eCommerce services, file storage and more should all work seamlessly with your new solution.



APIs

The rise of CPaaS is greater than ever in the current agile environment. If you want to make sure that you can create a complete UC 3.0 environment, then CPaaS will help with that. Through APIs and SDKs, you can embed your new collaborative solutions into your existing everyday processes.



User Adoption

Make sure that it's easy for your teams to embrace the new tools and applications that you want them to use. Otherwise they'll simply reject them. Companies like Cisco and Microsoft can provide training and videos to help with this.



Compliance and Security

With so many regulations to keep track of today, including GDPR, PCI DSS, HIPAA, and ISO 27001, it's crucial to ensure that all of your apps help to keep you on the right side of data privacy, and protected from fraud.



Pricing and Licensing

Make sure your tool suits your budget. Both Microsoft and Cisco offer easy-to-understanding licensing, capex and OpEX payment options, and more. Before you invest in your new solution, make sure you know it's ROI potential (Return on Investment), and Total Cost of Ownership (TCO).

CISCO WEBEX ADMINISTRATION

Microsoft and Cisco take unique approaches to the concept of encryption.

However, both companies take privacy and security very seriously. With Cisco Webex Teams, Cisco only ever decrypts consumer data within the client, so that data is **always protected when it's in the cloud**.

Some Cisco fans argue that the business is responsible for helping to pave the way for greater focus on security in the digital landscape. With a strong history in Enterprise communications and networking, security has always been a significant part of what Cisco does. Every line you write on a Cisco whiteboard and message you send via Cisco Webex Teams is encrypted.

Additionally, Cisco backs its privacy and security strategy up with proven certifications like ISO 27001, EPU model Clauses, Privacy Shield and more.

When it comes to compliance, Cisco is one of the market leaders.

As a compliance officer with Webex, you'll be able to access the Cisco Webex eDiscovery search and extraction tool available from the Webex Control Hub.

This makes it much easier to remain compliant with things like GDPR, ISO 27001, and HIPAA regulations.



For Administrative purposes, Cisco places as much control as possible into the hands of the end-user.

The Webex Control Hub provides complete access to all the tools and services you might need, with single-pane-of-glass management to simplify your day to day operations.

Once you feel comfortable rolling your new tool out to your team, Cisco can help with training and user adoption too. There is an extensive range of documents, [troubleshooting services and online classes](#) to get you started.

Over the years, Cisco, just like any other online provider has experienced the occasional outage. [Webex Technical Support](#) is available to help with this, and you can keep track of what's happening with the Webex services on the Support Centre too.

Although it's difficult to find pricing for Cisco's Webex solution online (you need to contact the a Cisco partner), Gartner claims that there are three options for customers.

You can, however, find the price for Cisco Webex Meetings, which is available starting from £11.25 for up to 50 participants. For up to 100 participants, you'll need the "Plus" service at £14.85 a month, and for 200 participants, you can access the [Business package for £22.50 per month](#).

For a comprehensive UC 3.0 strategy, the Cisco Collaboration Flex plan is available. This provides cloud, on-premise, and hosted collaboration services in a single user-based subscription.

Cisco's licensing model is rather complex due to the amount of flexibility and sheer number of products and features they have in their portfolio, therefore, my advice would be to consult with a Cisco partner who can explain everything in detail to you.

MICROSOFT TEAMS ADMINISTRATION

Microsoft is another giant in the world of security and encryption.

Remember, this is a company that has been building huge-scale solutions and operating systems for years. Security and compliance are second nature to Microsoft, and **according to the brand**, Teams is built on the enterprise-grade, hyper-scale cloud, complete with its advanced security and compliance features.

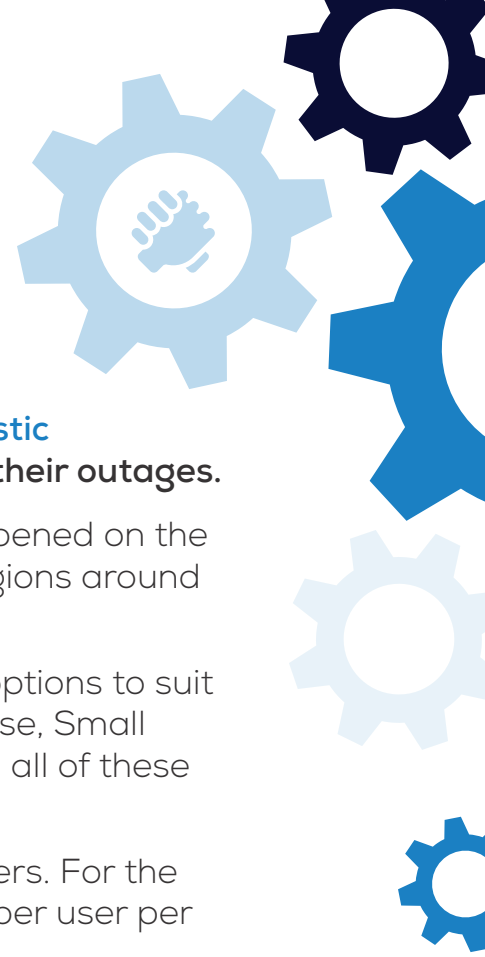
For encryption, Microsoft uses separate encryption cycles for transmitting and storing data. Teams uses the same security as the rest of the Office 365 platform, which means that it meets with HIPPA compliance regulations, ISO 27001 and 28018, and many of the other regulations that Cisco supports.

When it comes to admin tools, Microsoft doesn't shy away from giving end-users the control that they need. The Microsoft Security and Compliance Centre provides access to things like two-factor authentication and eDiscovery.

The Microsoft eDiscovery service means that you can easily find your electronically stored information for GDPR purposes, or to withdraw information for investigation. Audit logs are also available to enable managers to get a deeper insight into how tools and applications are used.

Through Admin portal, companies will have access to all of the information they need about their Microsoft Teams solution.

Microsoft is happy to support companies as they make their way into the ecosystem for the first time, with **support through training and user adoption services**.



Microsoft Teams also comes with [troubleshooting and diagnostic log features](#) that businesses can use to track the reasons for their outages.

One of the most recent disruptions to hit Microsoft Teams happened on the 18th of February 2019, and it affected multiple data centre regions around the world.

Licensing-wise, Microsoft Teams offers a range of Office 365 options to suit a variety of budgets. There are packages available for Enterprise, Small Business, Education companies, and developers. What's more, all of these prices are very transparent and easy to understand.

There's even a free option for smaller companies and freelancers. For the premium option, you can expect to pay anywhere from £9.40 per user per month.

Non-profits can enjoy significant discounts. Reach out to a Microsoft partner for specialist pre-sales advice.

Microsoft also adopts a 'buy online' approach which makes Teams easily accessible by the small business and SOHO (small office/home office) community.

With a little bit of tech savvy, you can sign up and get started with a Microsoft Teams collaboration and cloud phone system experience rather quickly.

This is a key differentiator when comparing Microsoft with Cisco, however, don't forget that Cisco have a wide network of service providers globally that will offer your small business a Cisco based solution, the challenge is locating the right one for you.

MICROSOFT TEAMS VS CISCO WEBEX TEAMS: WHICH TEAM ARE YOU ON?

Ultimately, both Microsoft Teams and Cisco Webex Teams are highly capable collaborative platforms.

While Cisco offers a more complete end-to-end system within its infrastructure through native contact centre solutions and phone systems, Microsoft also provides access to everything you need for UC 3.0. The main difference is that Microsoft relies more heavily on its partnerships with other leading competitors.

Choosing the right UC 3.0 solution for your companies means focusing on the concept of “experience” and how it applies to every touchpoint in your organisation. Don’t get so caught up on customer experience that you ignore things like Business, Team, and User experience too.

Additionally, remember that you don’t necessarily need to tie yourself to a full-stack vendor to get everything you need. A platform for innovation is what helps today’s leading companies to differentiate themselves in the modern market.

One thing you’re sure to notice about both Microsoft and Cisco, is they’re both dedicated to delivering a straight-forward approach to unified communications.

They’re continually investing in the services that they offer and evolving to suit the needs of the current environment. This means that both tools are ready to empower your team on the path towards UC 3.0.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR MICROSOFT AND CISCO?

The Microsoft Teams vs Cisco Webex Teams debate asks a very interesting question.

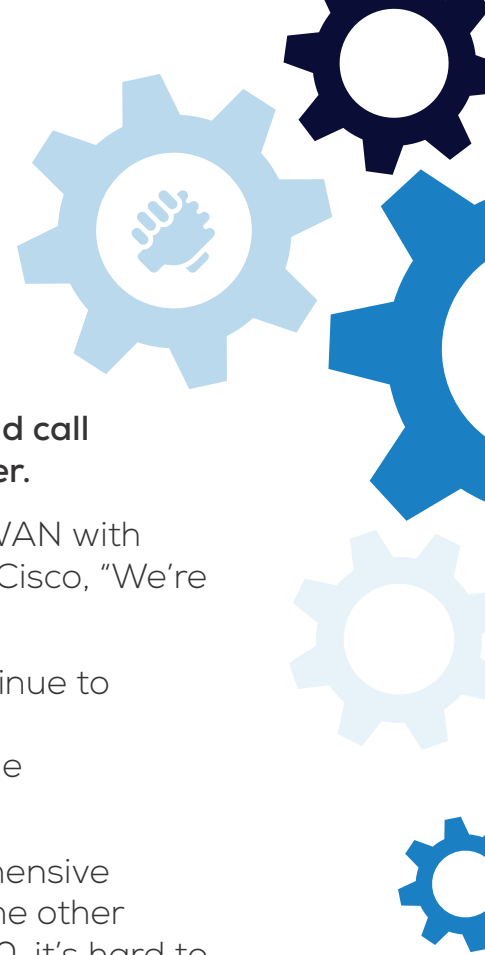
Is it better to have a single service to rule them all, or a tool that uses collaborations with vendors and industry leaders to drive your company forward?

Microsoft Teams is growing exponentially - in fact; it's the fastest growing application in Microsoft history. According to Lori Wright, the General Manager of Microsoft 365 "Teams makes collaboration more inclusive, effective and secure." With access to the Office 365 ecosystem for productivity and a commitment to filling the gaps in any capability needs with a strong partner ecosystem, Microsoft has a lot to offer.

Indeed, many Microsoft fans believe that Microsoft has a monopoly for the productivity suite.

Countless companies already rely on Office 365 to drive their day-to-day operations. This means that in theory, Cisco does have greater growth potential.

On the other hand, Cisco has the innovation edge, with more emerging technology from the hardware side of things.



Additionally, because Cisco can offer native contact centre and call solutions, it's meetings, and CX experience is arguably stronger.

Cisco already owns a Wi-Fi network through Meraki, and SD-WAN with Viptela. According to Amy Chang, the Senior Vice President of Cisco, "We're building bridges, not islands."

In the months and years to come, Cisco and Microsoft will continue to square off against each other as two of the most popular and well-respected tools for mobile and desktop collaboration in the enterprise world.

Microsoft and Cisco offer a far more professional and comprehensive approach to collaboration and communication than many of the other contenders in the collaborative space. When it comes to UC 3.0, it's hard to argue with the impact that both of these companies have.

Currently, neither of the two applications offer integrations as broad and vast as Slack. However, that doesn't mean that the integration opportunities won't grow in the future.

For most companies, the decision of whether to use Cisco or Microsoft for UC 3.0 will come down to one very simple thing - whether they already have a comprehensive background with one vendor or the other.

Because both Microsoft and Cisco offer more than just collaboration, they can rely on their prior experiences with customers in productivity tools, hardware, and software to drive adoption. The global marketplace for both companies means that they both have the power to accomplish incredible things in this growing environment.

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